

WE CLAIM:

1. A network element for delivering a communications service between first and second survivable rings, comprising:
  - a switch for controllably establishing connections between the first and second rings; and
  - a controller for controlling the switch and being operable to monitor the status of an other network element and establish a new inter-ring connection for delivery of the service upon failure of the other network element.
2. A computer-readable storage medium containing software that, when running on a processor, follows a sequence of steps to control a switch in a network element, the switch being operable to controllably establish an inter-ring connection between first and second rings, the steps comprising:
  - monitoring the status of an other network element; and
  - establishing a new inter-ring connection upon failure of the other network element.